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NARGAS

SONGS OF A SIKH

By BHAI SAHIB VIR SINGH

Translated into English

By Puran Singh

Foreword

By Ernest Rhy

SRI GURU SINGH SABHA
LIBRARY
Book
791

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FOREWARD

By—ERNEST RHYS

Nargas is a book of Sikh poems, which in its original garb has won the hearts of its Indian readers by its imagination, spiritual beauty and natural charm. Its writer, we are told, is "the reprsentative poet of the old order of the Sikh poets, who gathered round the throne of their beloved Master, the Guru Nanak, in wonder and worship." One is almost afraid to repeat in plain English the glowing words which his own people use in speaking of him. Only an Oriental tongue, only the figurative freedom of the Indian adepts, can render in full a tribute such as no Western poet has had in our own or in any time. We recall his *Song of the Nightingale*, taken prisoner and encaged, as we consider the plight of this Indian lyrist, confined within the rigid idiom of a foreign tongue:

As I sang my songs of mirth, I was caught prisoner;
The wily gardener caught me and put me in cage.
The walls of my prison were strong and high,
The door of the iron bars was bolted tight.
Pain entered into my soul.
The loss of the beams from the brow of my beloved darkened
for me all outside.

Bhai Vir Singh has found in the author of *Sisters of the Spinning Wheel* and *Unstrung Beads* an

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interpreter who has used a very free method in the English re-rendering. The translator has paraphrased, and often greatly expanded, his original, in trying to get an English equation for the closely compacted Punjabi verse. Bhai Vir Singh has the faculty that true poets have, of satisfying by the style and quality of his verse the critics and the cultured readers: yet he appeals just as strongly to the common people. "His touch," says his biographer, "has the power of making any one a poet. I have seen unlettered men and women glow at the emotion of his verse, as they listened to him." Indeed his effect upon his listeners appears to have something of the spell, akin to divine madness, spoken of by Plato.

As for his method—and it is always interesting to look into the workshop of the craftsman—"he draws a rough pencil-sketch and fills in the colours rapidly, which he does not alter, if the original idea or scene should fade from his eyes." He is one of those who prefer to suggest rather than to complete a given subject. It is not so much the cleverness of his word-painting, or any exact descriptiveness of his word-painting, or any exact descriptive faculty, but his imaginative atmosphere and his art of lifting common things into that atmosphere, which give his poems their individual power. There is another quality to be counted by the Western reader in the equipment of Bhai Vir Singh, and that comes of the race-emotion which we feel in all the genuine Sikh writers. He can claim indeed a remarkable pedigree

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and a tradition of culture in his own house and descent; he is the son of the famous Punjabi poet and scholar, Dr. Charan Singh, who translated *Sakuntala* into Punjabi, and did great service in giving literary vogue to the language. His maternal grandfather was a Sanskrit scholar, who wrote the *Lives* of *Sikh Gurus*. He himself, following in their steps, runs a printing press at Amritsar, and publishes a journal which circulates widely in the Punjab. These activities relate him, as a citizen and a man of letters, to his own time and to his own people.

But when we have tried to put him into his everyday and familiar surroundings, we are still, as Westerners, aware of an element mysterious, significantly Oriental, breathing of a world which is not quite ours. Behind his poetry there loom up the impressive, unusual forms of Sikh warriors and Sikh Gurus, of maidens like Ailin and Sirdars like Malek Jawala Singh. It is to Malek's grandson, the translator of this book, that we owe a sketch of that Sirdar's imposing figure. He was about seven feet tall, a slim wiry figure that always carried a huge bamboo staff shod with ironrings at both ends; as he passed, he inspired awe in everyone who saw him. His apparel was in the style of the old Sikhs. A small white turban was bound about his head, covering his long Sikh tresses; he wore, generally, two wide-sleeved kurta of home-spun tied by cords of the same cloth-one thicker and wider worn over one that was narrower and shorter. His face seemed fairly to glow with the fire of his Sikh ancestry His long white beard and his deep-set black eyes, his

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smiling prole, had profile the majesty and dignity of the characteristic Sikh leader.

Set by that, a companion-picture such as we get from the same writer of Nanak himself, who could turn even the slave's burden to a song, and who once sang a lament to the rebeck, that reminds us of the mediaeval lay of Jehuda Ben Halevy:

> They that wore long their lovely tresses, whose parting was touched with vermilion,
> The locks of their hair are shorn, and dust is cast on their heads,
> Their strings of pearls are broken; the chain is around their necks.

Through great trouble—the lot of the slave whose spirit could not be broken, the courage of the warrior, the devotion and ecstasy of the saints on earth—the Sikh poets learnt their inspiration. To their heritage Bhai Vir Singh has succeeded. But he has added a new and individual accent of his own people, a freshness and a personal appeal which go to their inmost sense. They recognise in him a poet, a spiritual leader. a master. He is, they will tell you, like Spinosa, a "God-intoxicated man," and a true lover and interpreter of his fellow men and women.

A word remains to be said about the frontis-piece, which is a colour reproduction from a drawing by one of the most remarkable of the new school of Indian painters, Abdul Rahman Chugtai. Good as the colour print is, it has been very much reduced to fit the page, and cannot give a perfect impression of the beauty of the original.

E. R.

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NARGAS

THE DEWDROP ON THE LOTUS-LEAF

I AM the dewdrop trembling on the lotus-leaf,
As the flower floats on the water!
Borne on a ray of the sun, I dropped,
Like a pearl strung on a thread of gold.
I quiver on the lotus-leaf as quivers the morning ray,
The hand that dropped me from on high
In itself holds all the strings of guiding light.
It is the hand of my King!
I play on the lotus-leaf to-day;
To-morrow I shall be with him!
He drops me, and he draws me up—,
A dewdrop on the lotus-leaf.

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MOONLIGHT

SWEET ones, wild ones ! moonlight dances !
A myriad tiny feet, like the feet of heavenly cherubs,
fall upon the dark green needles of the
ancient deodar !
I almost hear the footfalls.
There is such a storm of joy.
The beams of the moonlight fall on the boulders like
a pattering rain of needles.
I saw them falling on the flowing river, one by one,
Slowly, softly, softly, slowly dancing run the footfalls
of the moonlight, on the eddying waves.
The needls play on the bosom of the crystal waters,
The needls glint in the air,
The myriad feet of the moonlight weave rich meas-
ures of music on the ground,
A flood of rapture !
And the unmoving moonlight, calm above,
gazes into the face of the moon,
And the moon gazes deep into the soul of the moon-
light.
Sweet ones, wild ones ! the whole of the moon has
turned into one long look !
He has been looking on her for ages long ;
And she has been loving him for centuries.
He pours his love on her, the moonlight that flows
out of his soul.

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He loves to gaze into her eyes, the eyes of his very soul.
He floods the moonlight with new, new love every night,
He floods her with the threads of an unbroken rain of love.
The moonlight spreads along the ground, she roams everywhere ;
She wanders over the river and the rocks, over the fields and the forests ;
She enters the cities, the lanes, the huts of the poor and the mansions of the rich ;
She touches with silver joys the foreheads of both sinner and saint ;
She illumines the door of the mighty and weak ;
But it is all the dance of the little, little feet of the million-footed moonlight.
It is the storm of joy here below, it is the universal quivering of her feet.
The unmoving moonlight gazes deep into the face of the moon,
Her heart is strung up on high with the sacred, secret lotus.
Out of the love of a single twain. so much blessing flows for the worlds below,
With every one, yet with none.
Sweet ones, wild ones ! The moonlight is up in heaven, her feet only tread our velvet grass !
The moon and the moonlight !
The dance of her million feet on the shifting sea of the sands of time !

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And the repose above of the sacred two in the realm
of eternal love !
Sweet ones, wild ones ! The dancers of the moon-
light's love !

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NARGAS

He came this way; that way he went;
I saw him and I lost him.
He was but now before my eyes;
He has just gone that way.
He has just gone, and cannot yet return.
Ask me not what I am doing in the open—
in the rain, sunshine and storm !
Touch me not, advise me not !
He came this way; that way he went.
I saw him and I lost him.
He was just before my eyes;
I am not searching for him,
I am but looking the way he went;
They said he would not return;
But my left hand shades my eyes,
And I look—my eyelids do not droop—on the
road that he has gone,

My eyes close not, they are still looking for him
who hath not yet returned,
He who wakes in me ever new a thousand
feelings yet unborn, and thing of love
unknown to me—
He, he, who took my heart away by one glance
at me !
Touch me not, advise me no more, pray !

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I am not concerned with the hundred roads
that go;
I sit, and here I will sit, by this road where he
has gone;
I will wait here for him.
I will fix my eyes on this road,
He will look this way,
For this way I saw him go.

I am sad now for his love.
I will still sit and wait for him,
And let pass the pageant of the world.
It shall be nothing to me, if ages pass;
He will soon be coming this way.
Touch me not, advise me no more !
My mind has let go the hold of all the things
it had;
It is only an eye, a beautiful eye, a fixed gaze,
an unwearying look, a woman's vow;
It is only looking in the way I saw him go.
My mind is filled with sudden joy;
I feel he is coming, my eyes burn brighter;
But my heart soon fails with pain again, and my
eyes grow dim with tears.
O the pain grows unbearable !
And my eyes mourn as if the life of my life has
gone from me for ever.
I caution myself; no such ill forebodings will
I allow to rule within.
My eyes glow again from a hundred auspicious
signs,

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I make offerings of Joy to gods,
And I look along the way he went—surely he
connot be very far!
Day changes into night and night into day,
But changeth not my eyes,
They are fixed now for ever;
They have forgotten how to close,
They know no sleep, no rest;
My life needs neither meat nor drink,
It is all at gaze, on the way that he has gone.

Touch me not, advise me no more.
Destroy the tasks of duty!
Let go, in the great fire of death and change, the
deeds and the calls of life!
My vocation of life is this. Go from me. I am
not yours!
My body fails, let it fail, let it fade and ex-
tinguish!
But never shall the gaze of my eyes turn from
the way that he has gone!
Touch me not, advise me no more!
Life goes, let it go;
My soul is in my eyes, that look along the way
he will return to me.
Let eye and brain dissolve,
Let limb after limb fail,
Let my stems and my leaves drop;
But let my eyes last a little while more!
But life is in my eyes,

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The elements try in vain to dry me up by drying
blood and flesh and bone.
There is a little lamp of life lit by love and set in
the shrine of my eyes,
And I tell you the winds of death know not how
to blow it out.
It is the light of the beloved,
That burns in the infinite storm of change, unchanged
in my eyes.
My eyes are a spark of heaven ;
I live and live as long as heaven is,
As long as love and life are.
My eyes beam and glisten,
And they are fixed for ever on the road he has gone !
They shall look without an eyelid's droop for ever
along that way.
All other limbs are dead, let them die ; but let my
eyes remain.
The green stem has turned dry,
But heaven and earth feed the life in my eyes.
Heaven and earth nurse them who have ceased to
nurse themselves,
Eternity now is mine !
My eyes have been looking along the way my love
has gone from me.

In the name of Allah, I swear,
I had but one glimpse of him !
He came this way, that way he went,
I saw him, and I lost him.
He was but now before my eyes.

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He has gone, and hath not yet returned.
It was but one glance, one that made me so selfless.
It was one glance that made me for ever pale and white,
And on and on for ever, I look for him!
He made me death-pale, white and ill;
He took my sleep and rest away.
O Allah! I had but one glimpse of him!
My eyes are as cups held in a beggar's hands, waiting still to be filled with love.
He came this way, that way he went!
I saw him and I lost him.
He was but now before my eyes.
He has gone, my love has gone that way!
He has gone, and hath not yet returned!

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O KATEERA !

THE "Tree of Joy" of the birde and bridegroom,
O Kateera !
The ancient dye of the bride's hands !
O Kateera !
The joy of the merry wedded life !
O Kateera !
The perfume of two wedded souls made one.
O Kateera !
O love ! thine by ancient rights of joy, is *Kateera !*
O Kateera !
I saw the *Kateera* of the wild fields growing in the garden here.
Thine, I thought, is still *Kateera !*
O Kateera !
I went to the garden to bring home the "Tree of Joy" for thee, my love ;
But the gardener would not let me,
O Kateera !
He would not let me touch it,
O Kateera !
Though I cried, with a thousand strains of joy, in the voices of my quivering soul, the gardener would not listen !
O Kateera !
The world's worth I gave him, he would not give me even a leaf of *Kateera !*
O Kateera !

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My heart is sad for the garden and the land where
the flowers of love and joy are scattered to
the ground.
Up, my love ! Up, my ruby red of heart !
Put on thy turban now,
And take me where *Kateera* grows in nature free
and wild !

O Kateera !

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THE BIRTH OF GANGA

A SPARK of life, I saw shooting into the heavens.
The half-visible mist, brone on the southern sea-scented winds, seemed to roll it on,
A ruby glowing in the mist !
It was winging in an aerial cradle, hung on the golden rays of the sun in midmost sky.
It was the cradle of mists,
And a spark of life was glowing within ;
And the angels with their breath were fanning the spark of life that was soon to have its birth on the earth.
Down below, far below the mist, the white clouds gathered on the Himalayan summits, like many hoary headed sages to receive the spark of life from on high.
A burning ruby, like the morning sun, shot through the air,
Those were the clouds of the Himalayas,
With the spark of life glowing within.
The clouds could hardly hold for long the precious gem, so heavy they were with it.
The clouds dropped down in a storm of snow, on the Himalayan peaks.
And concealed in this storm of snow, the spark of life descended on the loftiest mountain of the globe !

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And the spark of life burned within !
The spark of life, *Ganga* of ancient fame, was seated
like a *Yogi* in the perennial snows ;
Her legs were crossed, her backbone straightened as
she brooded in thought ;
Her eyes were closed, her mind lost in *Nirvana* calm !
Her soul was gathered all within,
There was she seated like a *Yogi* in the snows.
But not the mists, the clouds not the snows, could
hold for long the spark of life ;
No trance of *Yogi* nor of *Nirvana* could long hold
the moving life motionless.
There is a grain of burning fire,
a gleam of the seed of eternal life
still glowing in the heart of *Ganga*.
This little grain of fire melts the glaciers,
And from the opened Gaumukh* of the glaciers flows
the *Ganga* down.
It is a little silver current of crystal joy water,
And the spark of life glows within !

Stealthily tumbling out of the Himalayas' lap,
Down she rolls dancing over rocks and stones,
And sparkles bright, catching the flying rainbows in
her hundered waves.
Undaunted flows the river *Ganga*, and nothing bars
her way.
Each little current of water, each little drop of dew,
that falls of the Himalayas grass, she beckons
to herself, and every one obeys her call.

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* The spot in the glaciers from where the River Ganges issues is likened to the "Mouth of the Cow" or Gaumukh.

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14 THE BIRTH OF GANGA

The rivers come, the rivulets come ;
And mightier, and larger, and happier flows the River
Ganga !
Day and night, unresting doth the river go,
And the spark of life glows within !

From the Himalayas down she descends on the
Sivaliks ;
And from the *Sivaliks* on to the East,
On to the East, the river goes,
Still brighter burns the spark of life within !

On to the East the *Ganga* flows;
Scattering the heavenly wealth around !
Plenty and prosperity to each and all !
The gifts of horses, cows and bulls !
The gifts of corn, of fruits and flowers !
Jewels and gems she scatters as she goes.
The mighty cities stand on either side of her banks,
waiting, like so many beggars, for her alms.
Something for all, nothing denied, the *Ganga* distributes life and joy as she rushes down.
The thirsty creatures of the forests drink from her
cup as she holds it to their lips.
Man, bird and beast rejcice !
The *Ganga* knows the ways in which heaven does
good to all,
The heat of the heat-opressed she takes to herself.
She fain would be muddy, if only others may be made
clean.

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She gives and forgives ; she knows how to serve
with her coolest waves, if only others may
be happier thereby.
Attracted onward by the vision of the ancient
teachings,
The *Ganga* seeks the sea.
To be one with the great infinite,
To be lost in the one great stream-the oneness of things.
At last she goes to the great ocean, blue and broad,
one infinfte stretch of things.
To rest in one unmoving motion.
All day and night, unresting, through the land she
goes, and never turns back.

The sea to the approaching *Ganga* said, "Who and
from whence art thou ?
Thou art great, full of every gem and scent.
Thou art fragrant with the fragrance of the earth and
of many a herb !
Thou bringest the joys of the land of the people,
rich-laden with gold and pearl thou comest !
Thou hast been showering Joys on all,
Thou hast brought blessing to all !
Pray, tell me thy tale, where is thy land, thy home,
O beautiful one ?
Proud of her Father-Himalaya and her high descent
from heaven,
The *Ganga* raised her head aloft and said :
"I come from the Himalyas,
From the largest, greatest, highest height.
And the deepest deep,

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From him self-lost in *Yoga*.
All I have now or did ever bring with me is his,
O sea !
All I gave to any that met me on my way is his.
The gifts are his, he the giver !
I am but a messenger of the great Himalaya-
stern ancient lover of men.
His waters are sweet.
His ore and precious stones are so fair and bright.
The gold shines in the sands there,
His air breathes everlasting ecstasies.
His trees are talisman-trees.
His herbs are weighed with charms.
His seasons revolve in endless fascination.
All glorious are his lights.
Those shades of deodar, the moonlight-snows,
The sudden falls of Auroras of the north,"

When the sea heard of the greatness of the Himalayas,
a snake-like wave coiled round his heart,
and he angrily replied ;
"True", he said, "he is high, but is not a very
Hell below, in the depths of his valleys ?
That greatness is of no avail which has so much low,
dark littleness by its side.
O beautiful one ! those that are high have enough of
the low ?
Look at me ! O fair new-comer from afar !
I am always of one level, neither high nor low,
Nor great nor small ; one great vastness !
I receive a thousand rivers and I increase not,

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A thousand rivers go out of me and I decrease not.
Nor have I any high peaks to show,
Nor is there any sudden rise or sudden fall in me.
No deep dark valley is in me, no half-scooped caves.
No cracked fissures or frowning wrinkles are on my face.
One great level, one vastness, one oneness I am !"

The *Ganga* collected herself, in supreme wrath,
And turned her steps back from where she came.
She murmured to herself :
"Back I will go. I will not stay with such a jealous wretch as the sea, so proud of his own low level."
And aloud she spoke with the voice of an angry goddess :
"Ah ! I had thought that the ocean is ever calm, silent and deep.
Thou hast spoken but as a shallow water-pot.
Thou hast not weighed what thou hast said.
It is true the Himalaya has deep valleys, deep wrinkles on his face ;
But, O sea ! his lowest level is higer far than the highest thou canst boast.
The high ones are ever high,
But higher even their lowest pitch than the highest crest of thy waves.
I wonder thou, so low thyself, speakest ill of him who sends thee feeding streams.
Knowest thou not thy Gehenna-depths of hell below this water-garb of honour !

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Knowest thou not thy treacherous caves below !
Knowest thou not how mean is this deceptive level of thine!
But thou knowest how to hide thy ugly gulf below this shining water sheet.
And there the high Himalaya, my father, stands bare in his own glory and joy, caring not to conceal even a single blot on his skin
There stands he, the highest, with all his scars and wrinkles on him.
There rise up his highest peaks, abode of angels and gods, in the transparent blue—
The snowy summits are kissed daily by the rising sun.
Behold the daily showers of gold on the hoary head of my father !
Heaven pouring itself down on him,
How sublime is he ! How mean art thou !
How he stands for eternity to feast the world with his flesh and blood !
How thou cringest here eating every crumb that each one throws to thee !
He is the giver.
Thou art but a beggar.
A beggar can brook not the greatness of his benefactor.
Concealing well thy black depths, thou proclaimest thyself without shame and fear, so faultless thou, that art so low.

Go ! I curse thee, thou shalt for ever drown in the deeps of thy own black hate."

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Then the *Ganga* turned away from the sea.
And the sea, self-drowned in shame, cried out :
"Go not, *Ganga*, go not away ! Come back, come
back to me,
I have been waiting so long for thee."
But the *Ganga* turned away indignantly from the
ocean,
The spark of life blazing high within !

The sea flatters her ;
But on she goes ; her eyes turned up to heaven,
heaven's eyes gazing into hers,
Still the sea, catching her by the hands and holding
her round the waist, tries to take her back
to his home.
" O God ! I will not stay with this monster of winds
and waves,
I will not stay with the slanderer of my great father.
Pray, heaven ! send down thy beams and bear me
upwards in their embraces.
And take me back to the lap of my father !
I will not stay with this monster of the waves."

The *Ganga* ascends.
On the shoulders of the winds, in the cradle woven
of the rays of the sun and moon, she is lifted
high to the mid-sky,
To the Himalayas back the *Ganga* flies.
In the cradle of light is her ascent,
Where the spark of life is fanned by angels.

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Once again she tries to forget the world,
Once again in the lap of Himalayas, the *Ganga* lies
and plays.
Once again she is lost in *Nirvana*.
Once again her legs are crossed, her backbone
straightened as she broods in thought.
Her eyes are closed, her mind is lost in calm.
Once again her soul is all gathered within,
Seated like a *Yogi* in the snows,
The eternal unmelting snows,
And buried in them, and aglow is still the spark
of life!
The *Ganga* sleeps, she sleeps again in trances on the
snows.
But the spark of fire she has in her soul rouses her
again.
Again she moves, again she flows; again she goes to
bless and love.
Tired and spent, again she returns.
Filled and refreshed, again she flows;
She is alive, and the spark of life in her soul burns
for ever.

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O FLOWER-GATHERER

"O FLOWER-GATHERER !" says the rose :
"Tear me not away from my parent-stem !
Linked with it, the life-sap of the infinite life flows
through me.
I blossom and glow and perfume the very universe.
All that come hither may drink of joy from the
fragrant scent of my soul.

"O flower-gatherer ! why dost thou take me away,
to have me all for thyself, thine only, denied
to all others !
Ah ! it will be so, it will be so—thou wilt have me all
for thyself.
But thou will retain me for less than a twinkling of
an eye.
And I, my perfume, my beauty, my soul, and all I am
will die."

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THE CUCKOO AND HER LITTLE ONES

The singing cuckoo has arrived,
Her songs of Spring are blazing high.
Her sleeping brood awakes in the crows' nests.
The little ones are restless and sad,
The nests to them are harsh as hell.
The nursing birds are in distress,
For the little ones swallow the sparks of love's fire,
And fly blindly after the voice of the cuckoo,
But as they fly the crows seize them with beak and claw ;
Back they take them to the nests and hold them prisoners there ;
And a thousand nursery rhymes they caw and chant to turn the little ones from the songs of the cuckoo ;
But the call of the unknown make them still restless.
The cuckoo-song steals their souls away.
The little ones fly blindly after the songs,
Nothing else can give them peace.
The parents who fed them from their own beaks keep jealous watch ; but the little birds fly away.
Perched on the topmost branch, the crows brood over their loss and think ;
"Our own children, born of us !
They who were to bear our pains and share our joys,
love us not.

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They have become thorns for us, —a sad, sad fate.
The cuckoo flies from wood to wood singing.
Her monotonous song overwhelms the wood with
a magic fire that the very air and water seem
to catch.
A rolling river of the fire of song flows through her
little throat.
Her strains cut the soul with pain.
The storm of love that blows from her makes empty
all the nests."
At last the crows understand that the charmed voice
of the cuckoo is the cause of their loss.
The cuckoo henceforth is their foe-they vow to
revenge themselves on her.
The cuckoo dares not fly near their nests ;
A hundred crows gather to tear her down.
But her voice is enough, heard even from afar,
As she unrolls the ancient scroll,
Singing the ancient songs of love.
By means of song she stirs the souls of her young
ones, so fatefully lost.
At last they fly away, forgetting the home of those
who have nursed them ;
And fly blindly whither the call from the unknown
for ever calls to them !

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I REMEMBER I WAS ON THE SWING OF LOVE

I

I REMEMBER I was on the swing of love, and it was
swinging high.
The very height made me pure and selfless.

II

As we swung, the beloved held a bowl to my lips.
I drank of it, my lips were honey-sealed,
It was, I saw, the wine of life, the bestower of love
and freedom.
I cast but casual glances downwards : the things on
earth looking up with sweet appeal.
I knew not that my very looks and smiles would be
my bondage.
My own smiles and looks become the chains by which
the things of earth bound me down.
They began to sling their sorrows and shades, and
the pains of hell, about my heart.
I blame on one, I only blame my binding looks and
smiles.

III

Ah ! again the swing of love and the freedom of the
air, the sun, and the soul !

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These chains would drop, if I could but catch again,
as before,....
As before the hem of the flying garment of him who
flies so high !
If he would only hale me, and if I could but hold firm
his helping hand !
Ah ! if I could bind him down to myself by his image
of love within my heart !
If he would only lift me up, and if I could but hold
his helping hand in mine !

IV

And now I fly again, for thus my chains did drop.
Again I am seated in my swing of love.
It is swinging full and high.
And the bowl is sweet, my love holds to my lips.
I drink of it, and to its lips my lips are honeysealed:
It is, I see, the wine of life, the bestower of love, and
the freedom of the air

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THE SEARCH OF JUMNA

I

O SISTERS ! He once came and camped at *Ponta*.
Who was it, that sportive swimmer ?
Who was it, that *vina*-player.
Who played his *vina* at *Ponta* once ?
Where is the fountain of life, O sisters mine ?
The fountain of life that gave life to all that touched
him ?
He came once, camped at *Ponta* and bathed in me.
Ah ! I bathed in him, or he bathed in me !
Sweet illusion !
He came all-sparkling and glowing ;
He came and laughed and sported, and swam in me,
And how I leapt and laughed, forgetting myself in
joy of him.

II

O sisters ! Such a dream it was, one of that no
waking can ever break !
He came playing and sporting, and made us play
with him.
He stood in the middle, and we all round,
In a glowing ring of sport and song !
He came, and oh ! his laughter !

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He made our voices ripple with joy, in that echoing,
laughing peal of us, all in the valley of *Ponta*.

III

He came, transfixing us all in the motionless joy of
his soul.
He played his vina,
The vina whose strings did draw us hither and thither
at will,
The vina whose bellowy, tremulous voice tossed our
hearts and souls up and down as it wished.
His vina, so enrapturing !
It was like silver in his hands;
O ! the moving dream-like tunes it made ;
The gentle, killing, loving call of his vina !
The all-thrilling symphony
Of his warbling vina !

IV

He came and he loved us,
And having loved us, O sisters,
He came and stole our hearts.
And having stolen our hearts, O sisters !
He came, he strained us to his soul.
And having strained us to his soul, O sisters !
He bound us fast with strings whose ends were in his
hands,
And having tied us fast with strings in his hands,
O sisters !
He has now hidden himself.

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V

My soul has caught fire in the search for that unknown fountain of life.
I asked of yonder heights,
I asked about him of the distant depths.
O sisters ! In my search supreme I have visited every one,
Till all my relations caught my pain;
I searched for him and they ran hither and thither for news of him.

VI

We searched the lands, we searched the sea ;
Nor I nor my relations found that mystic joyous swimmer.
He was not found on earth, the ardour of my search burned high in me ;
Riding on clouds, driving an aerial chariot all day and night,
I raised my head from the ground, and afar I looked for him in the aerial regions.
I looked for him from isles, from sea to sea,
I wandered over all the continents,
In every street of the world my chariot rolled !
From my chariot, my wrappings blown by the winds that passed, I gazed all intent into space.
Travel wearied me, flight tore me, tattered and shattered, worn and torn, like a shipwrecked mariner, I returned to the Himalayas !

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VII

I left my aerial chariot. In restless fire of soul I rode
again the current of water that I saw tumbl-
ing down from the Himalayan precipice !
I bagan again a search in places I had searched before,
Once again I came along those very paths,
Once again to the vale of *Ponta* ?
I looked again for him ; but my eyes saw him not.
Nowhere I met my vina-player.
I had no leisure, my every single look inquired from
the hundreds assembled around.
I looked in haste from face to face so blank and
vacant. My very glances wandered !
And on and on I went.

VIII

In waters I found him not,
Nor found him on land.
Never again I met him, never again !
Months sped and years rolled away,
Centuries passed me by,
But no news !

XI

Yogis came, and they of sèlf-control'
The seers came, and they of ascetic mould ;
The slow grinders came, the men of customs and
conventions, and they of a thousand powers.

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I inquired from all the holy ones, and each replied
in state spiritual phrase.
"He is soul, they said ;
"Transcending figure and form, he has blended
himself with cosmic light and life !
Seest thou not heaven ablaze,
And seest thou not light that shines in the still high-
er firmament !
Seest thou not that the rocks and rivers and all this
earth beat with his transcendent life !"

X

Good-bye, my friends ! Good-bye !
Is this the knowledge admired by the Yogi and these
men of self-control !
Is this the thought to assuage the unrest in their
hearts ; the thought that gives them peace !
Alas ! words and pious praises like these can never
quench the fire of my soul.
No, my wise friends! Good-bye!
No altered form, no portrait, pray !
I wish his own beauty were before me !
No greater glory, no truer thing, pray!
I wish my own king of life were before me again.

XI

A sun-like shining crest he wears on his turban.
I wish the same crest might shine before my eyes
again !

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And with it the gold-tipped arrow of that highstrung
bow he carries.
I wish he would come and stand before me as then,
with his bow and arrows.
Nobody else nor any other charming thing, pray!
I wish my own king of life to be with me.
I long for this to take place once again.
If only he would come in the same old way!
Bringing with him that nimbleness of his, that laughter
that leapt from wave to wave.
If only he would come and swim again and sport again
as he used to swim and sport!
If only he would come and transfix me again by his
glory!
If only he would come and touch his vina again,
And sing to us once more his songs,
Then my thirst would be appeased.
The fire of my soul would leap from wave to wave in
joy,
My every limb and organ would burst with the blos-
soms of life as it once was when he was with
me.

XII

But if he is not to revisit *Ponta*!
If all this has but been to torment me with an ever-
lasting longing,
Only to waken in me an eternal pain!
Welcome then is the life of pain!
And welcome is the everlasting longing!

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And welcome is my task of searching for him for ever.
I will have him and the vision only,
Nothing else, and nothing else!

XIII

Let ages go and come!
Let cycles roll as they may,
And let him be wherever he wills,
My search shall never cease,
My longing for him will never end.
Enough for me, this vocation of pain,
I revel in this killing thirst,
The misery of this hunger is my life and joy for ever.
When there flashes on my soul the thought of him,
My soul with its million waves of voice revels in
"naming him."
And my life bleeds arrow-pierced.

XIV

But he pulls me always ; the strings are still in his
hands.
I live, and the arrow of love shot from his bow is
still in my heart.
And thus I wish to go on for ever and ever, moving
towards no certain goal.
Nothing else and nothing else !
From land to waters, and from waters to land
again !
To fly in air, to roll in sand, and yet arrive nowhere,
A Yogi blessed in his pain.

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XV

O sisters ! Stay a while, turn not your backs on me !
Go not till you have listened to me as I relate my
pain !
I had but one glimpse of him, and then no more,
One glimpe of him has brought to me the pain that
shall last for ever.
Such it means to see that unknown fountain of life.
Turn not, sisters, your backs on me !
Bless me before we part.
And wish that my lord may come to me again,
That the soul of life may return in those very limbs
which I saw and touched once and for ever.
But there steals forth no hand to take me to his
realms of beauty.
No sleep stirs in me that dream.
Pray for me that he himself in great compassion
return to me !

XVI

He who made me athirst for him will moisten my
parched mouth.
My eyes shall seek him in space for ever !
My heart shall ever flow in a flood of tears,
My soul shall put the supreme inquiry to everyone.

XVII

His thought is in me and his name is on the tongues
of my hundred waves of feeling.

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I will flow in his name for ever.
And I will be as I am now,
Till my beloved himself come and stand before me,
as once he did stand at *Ponta*.
Till I say, "Peace! O sweet ones! Peace! He has
come to me,"

XVIII

O sisters, he once came and camped at *Ponta*!
The man whom we thought we knew so well, and
yet so dimly, O sisters!
Where, where is that vina-player whose vina drew
us out of ourselves for ever?

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LOVE AND WISDOM : TOLD BY A NIGHTINGALE AND A WAYFARER

I

"THE SUNNY day grows dark,
Vacant is the abode of my love;
His garden, once so full and gay, is empty to-day.
No flowers bloom, no fruits hang luscious on the boughs !
No golden pods, no honey drips below !
O gods ! this is but a cruel deception.
The rose-bearing branch is trampled low in dust,
Torn is the tree wherein the bees swarmed in their myriads. Where have they gone--the fresh shoots and the bursting youth of the trees and creepers he loved ?
Where is that living greenery of moss, and those leaves and grass ?
No more one sees those ripening buds, those full-blown blossoms smiling ;
But naked, thorny, blanched boughs, like bones, instead !
The eyes of the trees are closed,
They stand as blind men, and the doors to the soul are shut for ever.
The sweet omnipresence of beauty, sweeter still, the fairy harmony--all are gone.

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Oh, who has stolen the life of all that glory ?
The glory is gone !"
A lonely nightingale sighed thus, and spoke to a passer-by :
"Brother wayfarer ! God bless thee Stay, stay a while,and say why the abode of my beloved is but a wilderness now !
Where ? Where is that all-owner of the loveliness of youth ?
What fates have borne him away, and where ?"

II

The wayfarer replied :
"Long, long ago the heaps of flowers lay below the trees,
The gardener of the garden reaped the harvest of thy rose,
The flower-sellers and the perfumers thronged around,
In open mart was sold long, long ago what thou callest thy love !
The glory of the garden then shifted to the city streets.
The flowers were woven in thousand fancy forms,
The delicate-limbed maidens wore them in their ears,—
And in love-garlands round their lissom necks ;
And flower-offerings passed from one to another,
And wristlaces, necklaces, ear-rings, were passed round the town !

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And shy were the new brides in the presence of
their new bridesmen—veils of flowers conceal-
ling their blushes beneath.
With the flowers a tide of love rushed into the city ;
The beds were strewn with roses,
The people sat under the shades, drinking sherbet
scented with petals of thy rose,
And others distilled the leaves and caught the flying
scent water and in crystal glasses.
So went the rose, from place to place, bound in
painted vases.
Thy rose ! thy rose is gone !
Wings can no more take thee to him ;
O stricken little bird ! Nothing availeth now,
Nor can he come to thee, nor canst thou go to him.
In vain the pain of love ! In vain is thy longing now !
But where hast thou been so long?"

III

The nightingale sings :
"Spring was in all its glory, and the leaves were new
as my eyes first drank the light of the sight
of my love.
But as I made my flights of joy from bough to bough,
As I sang my songs of mirth, I was caught prisoner.
The wily gardener caught me and put me in a cage.
The walls of my prison were strong and high,
The door of the iron bars was bolted tight.
Pain entered into my soul.
The loss of the beams from the borw of my beloved

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darkened for me all outside.
Oh ! I had sold my liberty for love. I was torn from the home of my ancestors, the wild spaces of the forest, the old laughter, the joys of those free-will flights over hills and dales, over the expanse of rivers, those fiery wingings in the blue.
Gone for ever the ancient home and the chosen freedom that was mine ! All gone, because I loved !
Alas ! the cruel hand of fate took away my love from me.
In anguish did my soul flutter its wings within the cage.
I tried to fly ; but the hard prison bars struck me almost dead.
This was heaven's reply to my prayers for one more glimpse of my love.
O gods ! When would it open-this door of iron bars ?
When should I see again that light ?

IV

"But no feeling of compassion came to the jailer's heart.
He would stand with his children about my cage. "
And they would clap their hands and dance and say,
'What a beautiful warbler !
When I, in a bitter anguish of soul, unable to control my heart, cried at last,

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'Who knows the state of an imprisoned soul whose
freedom is in the will of another ?
Better death than loss of the freedom of living. If
freedom depart from the soul it is better
that life should cease for ever.

V

"Men have fought, and they fight still for freedom's
sake. Great are those who lose their lives
to be free and to set free,
But the earthly life of bees, of birds, and of fakirs and
saints is at the mercy of others.
If any hurt them, they will but smile in reply,
O brother wayfarer! I knew not my garden would thus
be laid waste.
I knew not all would thus be ruin, dust and ashes,
beyond my control.
I passed my days hoping, one day, to be free ; that I
might see my love again,
To-day, the little child of my jailer left the door open;
And I, taking my chance, stealthily flew out,
And came and saw my garden, a dreary waste.
My heart gushes out in thousand streams of blood to
listen to the story thou hast told me now ;
My love ! O my love !"

VI

And the wayfarer replied :
"Tragic is thy tale !

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Alas ! there is none can assuage pains like these.
But I understand not how thou canst call this garden
thine.
The gardener planted all that is here with his own
hands.
He sowed, he weeded, he watered the roots of all
these fruits and flowers ;
His praying eyes watched the growth day and night.
Truly all this is the fruit of his labour.
All that the garden grows is his, by every law and
human right.
He is the owner of his own ; say not a word, blame
him not,
Thou hast no claim,
Thy sense is caught in overwhelming illusion.
Give up these wild fancies.
Thou canst have what is not thine.
Know this—be wise and sing, forgetting thy pain.
There is still a song in thy little throat, the song that
heals the wounds of woe ;
Why not sing, O little bird, and heal thyself !"

VII

The nightingale sings :
"O wayfarer ! thou art full of wisdom, but empty,
meseems, of pain ;
Thy heart is whole, no pangs of love within, no
wounds of life are there ! Ay ! thou art
free of pain !
But, traveller ! the pain of love is great.
He knows who has the wounds of love within,

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When love chooses to pierce the heart, there is no
human cure for this sweet, sweet ailment,
No song is there that can allay the heat of the pain
of love; the true song makes it more
intense.
All cures that are prescribed for this pain increase
it the more.
Thy words are of wisdom, the flowers and fruits are
truly the gardener's;
But now let wisdom turn back to my old home,
where I and my love lived in peace.
He lived in me and I in him,
My life and his were one,
But they plucked my rose and made a garden out
of my forest!
My tender wings could not forbid, nor the trembl-
ings of my heart prevent the hand of might
that removed my beloved from the ancient
home.
O wise man! why fight with fancies, building
castles of words, when might alone is right
on earth?
Why all this discourse on justice and right?
Ponder a little, O brother wayfarer!
Who loves the rose?—the gardener or the helpless
heart of a bird?
Beneath all that sowing and weeding, watching
and longing seest thou not the self concealed?
The gardener sells the rose that he loved without a
thought, as thou sayest;

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Gold rolls into his humble hut, and sufferings fal
the head of the rose.
What pain has the gardener felt?
He has but pain for his gold.
The heart of Bulbul is clean, not a speck of self or
desire is there;
Drawn by a thin thread of love, to a foreign land she
came flying for her rose, and flyink knew not
why.
Love-bound, this little life was thrown into a thousand
fires,
Self-abandoned were the forests of God (planted by
Nature's own hands) for a nest in the garden
of man,
There was no wish within the fibres of my flesh save
one tremendous longing that he might be
before my eyes,
That I might be somewhere near him,
That he might dwell within the depth of my eyes,
Bathing in the nectar, in the joys of this little life and
breath, trembling with infinite emotion from
the songs of his prise!
O brother wayfarer! we birds learn the law of beauty
when we are fledglings in the nest;
We know that beauty is ever-growing joy when we
surrender ourselves to things of beauty.
He cheats himself who thinks ill of them; and thereby
the eye of the soul in him grows dimmer
day by day.
If the eye be undimmed and clean

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The soul gleams in eternal glances,
Glory in the soul, and the soul in glory!
O brother wayfarer! we know of a life above this life,
The life of rapture caught from the lips of the rose.
It is a subtle, subtle feeling,
Both unbalanced and balanced joy;
Both unconscious and conscious love.
A soft reeling, a little rippling,
And a slow, slow breeze.
It is a heart full of glory,
And a life full of peace,
O wayfarer! say which is right, which is wrong?
Love seems frail and might seems strong."

VIII

And the wayfarer replies:
"Thy reason is great, O bird of deep pain!
But who loves the right purely for its own sake?
All is might that reigns, because right asserts not itself.
Selfishness sways the common world;
Dearer than all else to man is self,
And no one seems willing to love truth.
They would rather close their eyes and see not its intense light,
O bird! thou art so frail and weak.
To cry for thy rose in this wilderness of noise is in vain!

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The drums of self and desire beat loud, and louder
resound the cries of men.
Oh! in such a storm of noise, who will listen to the
voice so subtle and sweet?
For if thy voice were heard, this world would be a
garden of roses, its very dust would shine as
particles of gold,
No one wonld hurt another, each would be free in
himself, related to others by dear love and
service, tied to others by self-sacrifice and
joys of living; all care would be over, all
woud be as it is in heaven.
But since this seems never to be,
Why not think of some other cure fore thy pain?
So I offer thee my thoughts, that they may heal thy
pain;
And may Allah bless thee!
It is true, thou didst surrender thyself to the beauty
of thy rose,
It is true thy love is deep and clear, without a speck
or spot of self; and clean is the eye of thy
soul that drinks the light of thy rose,
But pray, why did not thy eye discern that one day
all this would die—both the garden and its
blossoms gay?
Why can it not see that spring shall die,
And the autumn of dead and decaying leaves take its
place;
And the flowers and leaves fall to the ground dust
with dust!

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Ah! Why can it not see that autvmn shall destroy
thy rose !
If the gardener were not to come,
Nevertheless, still would come the dark day that
troubles thee so much;
False, meseems, was the voice of spring if it promised
to stay with thee for ever.
Such was fate, and vain is thy grief!
In vain are thy lingering looks !
And unfair, meseems, to blame anyone else, when
nothing can avert the coming of this day for
thee whose love and joy is bound up with
spring,
Sure, this lack of wisdom makes thee so full of.
sorrow and pain."

IX

The nightingale cries out:
"O love ! If death to be thy end at last,
Then why this life?
Why then that promise if thou wert to die, my love?
And why hath not death seized me too?
In vain is this crowded fair of life, if thou art really
gone.
Why am I not already dead ?
Impossible is life if love be gone, as the sunlight
without the sun,
It is like the existing of what cannot exist, the living
of the not-living.

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O brother wayfarer! O heart of compassion! Pity me!
Tired now am I of my life, pray end it for me!
Darkness spreads around me is the void seizes my soul, this moment for me is the moment of all–death!
Pray, brother! pray be kind, end, end my life!
My mind is drak, the flame of my heart is extinguished!"

X

And the wayfarer replies:
"Grieved am I to see that my words have given thee so intense a grief!
It seems I almost took your life, O bird of passionate heart!
Weepest thou for the past, and wishest thou to die now for no reason,
But knowest thou not the hidden future?
All that is must pass, as the wheel of change revolves;
'Changing permanence' it is, that marches without a moment's rest;
No halt here; continuous the march of the divine caravan.
Spring with its blossoms is gone,
Autumn sets in; this too shall go,
And the spring shall come again.
These thorny leafless branches cause thee pain,
But the wheel shall roll, the zephyrs blow, the season again shall come;

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Again the purple leaf-buds ! again the green leaves
shall appear in millions,
Again the buds blow, and the armies of flowers come
and encamp again !
Why weepest thou, O bird !
Why desirest thou thy death?
Wait but with patience a little while more !
Sure, thy distress shall soon be ended".

XI

The nightingale sings:
"If beauty lasts not for ever,
Of what worth then is beauty ?
If my garden waves not for ever,
If all is the sport of time,
If time conceals him we love behind its ever-enwrapping sheets, and reveals him at will below its folds,
And conceals him again from us,
If love is not our own, but time's,
If time is supreme, and we only propose for time
to dispose, and our heart is merely to run to
waste in time's sands,
Then all wanderings in search of him, ay, even life
and goodness, all are as death ;
To thirst for love, to roll through despair and
seperation for the hope of meeting him is all
illusion :
If the lightning-flash of love shows itself only to kill
us, then where, where is love ?

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If all is change, and there is nought save waiting and
thirsting, and waiting and thirsting for nothing to be,
If this is the law eternal as thou sayest,
If we are but the passive balls that a mocking destiny
rolls;
Then let me tell you that too sad, too sad is life.
To be sad, then, is our vocation
So let me tear my robe; and wear the garb of sadness,
And shatter this heart to pieces.
For to be sad is all that is left."

XII

The wayfarer replies:
"Peace ! Peace ! O lovely bird !
There is the rose, still perfuming thy tender heart,
If it be thy wish to see the glory that fades not,
If it be thy longing to be with thy rose for ever,
Turn within, within, turn within thine own self thy
love-thirsty glance !
In vain is thy search for the rose in this visible world
of change.
The eternal spring is theirs who have entered in and
seen him within their soul,
If it be thy wish to dwell in the ternal glances of thy
love, then be at peace with thyself.
Let the flame of the heart burn slow and steady,
Let the mind be calm, like an unrippling clear,
transparent lake ;

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And pass, O bird, into the being of the beloved,
whence come these forms of beauty
Thou hast indeed thy rose when thy heart falters
not-sure, unmoved: witness of the ruin of
all the sensual worlds.
O bird!
The worlds are all within thyself.
There blossoms thy rose which no hand of might
can rob or destroy;
The eye of the soul, so fixed on the beloved, drinks
deep at the fountain of life.
Good-day, O bird. This is the ancient wisdom!
The law of beauty that ye learn amid the young
brood in the nest,
This is the law of true life, which is the life above
this life,
The life of rapture caught from the lips of the rose,
The rose that blossoms within, where eternal
spring doth roll.
There, as thou sayest; and only there—only there!
It is a subtle feeling.
An unbalanced and balanced joy.
An unconscious and conscious love; soft, delicious
reeling, a little rippling, and a slow breeze.
The heart is full of glory,
And the life full of peace.
Within that *Golden Land* there is neither right nor
wrong;
And might *is* frail and love *is* strong."

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THE SUN—WEARER

On the anniversary of the birthday of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji

(The poet's life is an unending passion for his Master Inspirer. His longing for him is worshipful. He composed a little music and a dance-measure on the anniversary of the birthday of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, of which the following is a crude rendering.)

(1)

O beautiful sun-wearer, with the sun in thy crest!
I am sick at heart!
Thine arrow has pierced me, the ray that darted
from the sun thou wearest in the crest
Pray come and stand before my eyes,
And heal my hurt, my love!

(2)

O beautiful wearer, with the sun in thy crest!
My strange, strange friend!
So soon as I was enchanted,
So soon as I fainted away,
didst depart;
Thou didst take aim, and the arrow of separation
hath found its mark.

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(3)

So soon as thou didst love me,
So soon as thou madest me thine,
So soon as thou madest me the bee of the lotus
which is thy feet,
Then, then, without a word to me,
Thou didst depart;
And I knew nothing, my love! Oh, I knew nothing
then.

(4)

I have sought that honey from flower to flower
I have looked above, below.
I find nowhere and in no flower the honey I tasted
then.
I find nowhere the like of the love thou gavest me.

(5)

O love! Why, why hast thou gone across to the
other side of the river?
I know not how to swim,
There is no hope of my swimming across;
Come thou thyself, my love!

(6)

Thou dwellest on those high far mountains,
And I, a bird without wings, lie here below.
Come to me, or take me with thee,
O friend of the poor!

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(7)

I have nor beauty nor art,
By thy favour I am;
Thou madest me!
And thou art God.

(8)

O beautiful sun-wearer, with the sun in thy crest
Come and meet me, come and meet me,
Meet me to-day, and greet me with a kiss,
Thy love is all my life.
In the name of thy beautiful, beatific vision,
Come to me, my love! Come to me!

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THE SONG OF THE GODAVARI*

(The river Godavari feels a glorious joy as Sri Guru Gobind Singh wets his feet in her waters, and the river bursts into the following ecstatic song).

The thrill of life, the lotus-touch of his feet, has
made me sweetly insane with joy,
The sacred moon has drawn to me the trembling
tides of song.
In every wave of mine throb the rhythm of the
celestial song,
And I tremble as a little reed shaken by the wind.
It has kindled suddenly every ripple of mine with
the glow of life,
And in my myriad waves I quiver forever, restless
in love, like the lightening of the sky.
It has lifted me off my feet, and float in sweetest
confusion of love;
I rise out of myself, every drop trembling in this
universe of song.
I melt into a million ripples at his feet
O sisters! say what strange and sweet gift is this
That has made me free?
Many an adept came; I ran to touch the feet of each

---

* The Godavari, like, the Ganges, is a sacred river where hundreds and thousands of the Hindu saints, adepts and yogis go on pilgrimage.

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I laved the feet of hundreds of the jogi-saints,
I bathed with devotion the feet of many priests and
pious men,
But my soul returned, finding no fountain of life where
I had dreamt so love-thirsty.

But, sisters, who has been so sudden kind to me
to-day; and so like a shower of heavenly grace?
Who makes me, the least of his devotees, the queen
of heaven?
Who has pierced me to-day with the tip of his love-arrow
from whose delicious pain I have become a
perfectly-tuned string?
Who overwhelms me thus with the infinite?
And who transfixes me in wondrous love,
quivering forever with song, shuddering forever
with the glow of his love?
Say, sisters, who has been so kind?

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HE SPEAKS NOT, NOR DOTH HE SMILE

He speaks not, nor doth he smile;
My love is like a statue made of spotless white marbles
He ravishes my soul—Ah! the all-beautiful
My heart aches and aches, but he unraveis not the
passion of my soul
I desire, and he filleth me not.
I fain would turn away from him, but ah! the all-
beautiful

Let my soul ache
He speaketh not, nor doth he smile
Enough for me is his presence
Enough for me these eternal desires and their eternal
unfulfilment.

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I ALWAYS THINK OF HIM

I always think of him!
Deeper than thought, unseen and unknown, in me
lives this unending thought of him,
A thousand quivering melodies shake my depths.
This thought of him is celestial music.
My soul is now the heaven of song.
A million strings vibrate in me; every moment new
and newer, more and more the symphonies
roll!
The strings of my soul are strung and tuned to new
and newer strains of love; and every moment
I give forth sweet joy;
I am an unending song in the thought of him.
I always think of him.
Deeper than thought, unseen and unknown, in me
lives the unending thought of him.

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I CANNOT CONTROL MY HEART

I CANNOT control my heart.
Out of my control it goes, if only to touch his palace-door.
My blind senses feel the marble of his towers so high,
The flesh of my soul is lost in ecstasy at the touch of his marble walls.
Ah! I cannot stay there nor return.
I am drowned in oceans of joy.
I am dumb with song,
I say nothing, I know nothing.

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THE PLAY OF OUR MASTER

AS the thunder-cloud lowered again, the mountain
cried from mortal fear :
"Ah ! my foe, with slow-creeping gait, is coming
again !
Whence and from whom may I get a cover, a cover
so vast that it will shelter me from rain !
Oh ! the ancient foe with slow-creeping gait is on
me again.
Oh, he that covers all, he that covers the sky,
May he protect me under his roof to-day !"

The praying mountain cowered down like a black
buck before the lion-maned thunder-cloud
as it sprang high in air !
But softly he looked at the fear-stricken mountain;
He smiled, he tore his bosom asunder—to show
his heart of love. It was a flash of lightning !
"O brother mountain ! fear naught from me !
True, thou givest me thy flesh and blood; but I too
keep nothing, I only bear the gift.
He is the giver, thou art his gift,
And I am but a slave of him and of thee that spread
the feast divine all around.
By his will thou givest !
By his will I will go and distribute the gift :
Alike we work his will; nothing in the world is
ours.
All this is the play of our master."

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WHO DARES DRINK WITH ME?

WHO dares drink with me–except the rolling waves
of the Chenab?
The quarrels of Ranjha* are not ended yet.
His bowl is yet on the potter's wheel.
On the moonlit bank of the Chenab standeth she,
the daughter of *Jhang Syal.*
The river rolls on, and she pours out at last her
golden vase of wine on the Chenab
The wine trickles in a thin ruby thread on the
rolling waves;
And the majestic river rolls on!

---

*Ranjha is the classical hero of the Punjabi literature who gave up everything for the love of the daughter of Jhang Syal, the Hir of the Punjabi poetry.

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I MADE MY MIND A BEGGAR'S BOWL

I MADE my mind a beggar's bowl.
I wandered, and begged the bread of learning from
door to door;
I filled it with crumbs that fell to me from every
house of learning.
I crammed it very full; I made it heavy, and I was
proud;
I thought I was a pundit,
I wished to walk far above the earth in my pride,
My steps hardly touched the ground.
One day I went to my saint.
I placed my bowl before him, and I gave it as an
offering;
"Dirt, dirt," he said, and turned it upside down.
He threw the crumbs away,
He rubbed it with sand, he washed it with water,
clean of all the dirt of learning.

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TO MY CHRYSANTHEMUMS,— GOOD-BYE!

MY CHRYSANTHEMUMS !
I was seeking you in space for one whole year !
You came, and now you are going away.
Our meeting has been but for a brief interval.
You have been to me a vision of glory,
I forgot the features of man in yours.
You have been the close friends of my leisure.
You healed my wounds of a day,
You made me whole with your smiles.
And how you beamed and glowed as we met;
Not a single line of woe was on your foreheads,
Not a single streak of difference was in your hearts,
Which were as gay as pure.
And you knew not how to think or hate.
You met me as beings made of joy and love and song;
All so unlike the men I am wont to meet.
You have been a vision of glory to me,
My heart bloomed with joy as it nestled in your blossoms.
Your looks have been the light of my heart!
Your love lifted such a burden from my soul!
I rolled in sweet, sweet fancies,
And returned to you again and again in my joy.

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TO MY CHRYSANTHEMUM

Neither world nor man I missed under the spell you
cast about my heart.
But you came, and now you are going away.
When you are gone,
When your faces are hid below the veil,
My house will be but a wilderness!
Then who will meet me with smile like yours?
And who will revive my tired soul?
Ah! who will come to the lovesick ones, and
lighten the pangs of their hearts?
O innocent friends! O fairy wearers of the attire
of beauty!
Why are you preparing to go?
Why this rolling up of the beds?
Why this closing of the windows?
Why this shutting of the doors?
My chrysanthemums! More than men and women,
you are my very kin;
They say that man is the crest of the wave of life.
But what is man, since he has forgotten his soul and
dropped his blossoms in a helpless waste of
thought!
And what is man who is lost in the smoke of the
fire that burns within him!
Ah! what is man who burns and troubles and frowns
and hates,
Whose heart doth seethe like a cauldron with the
dark passions of self!
Ah! he has become a wilted flower, a dead and
decaying leaf;

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He is not the lord of creation.
For he is lord of creation
Only if he be lord of himself.

My chrysanthemums, you are better than man and
woman, for your hearts are pure.
You live and bloom in the sun of life, borne on the
very root that shoots up and rears you in air
and sky, on the very stem that gave you
birth!
You have come! Welcome! But stay!
And let the vision of you last a little longer,
For your faces send forth heaven's gleam.
The lonely poets turn their back on man;
They love to live in your beauty, your joy, and your
innocence!

My chrysanthemums!
I was seeking you in space for a whole year.
You came, and now you are going away.
Our meeting has been for but a brief while.
Must it be good-bye, then?
Good-bye so soon; our joy has just begun!
Good-bye then! For you must go.
Go! But my hope goeth not away.
I will look for you again,
I will long for you again for one whole year.
I still will love your faces! O fairy wearers of the
attire of beauty!
And you will come again to me.
For I shall dream of you for one whole year.
Good-bye then, my chrysanthemums, go!

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THE CREEPER'S CRY

I

When being torn from the tree

AH! drag us† not away from here!
And pull us not aside!
Do not rob us of our slumber of love.
Seperate not those that are bound, like us, in love's
most sweet embrace,
O fellow—man!

Ah! I am alive, I feel pain;
Thy scythe cuts me,
Thy pulling hurts me,
Thy tearing down wounds me!
Break not the years' long reverie of us two,
O fellow-man!

Ah! bruise me not,
Do not throw me down in the dust
Or tear me from the neck of the beloved.
What loneliness will fall on me,
O fellow-man!

It is not good to seperate the twain that love unites,
It is not good to sever where two have met together,

---

†"Us" is the Punjabi woman's "me," which has become plural on account of her supremacy of feeling, as if she was the very queen of life and love.

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It is not good to take away the prop and stay of
things,
It is not good to tear apart the loving twain that
mingle, to make, to make them broken
single things,
O fellow-man!

Learn higher joy, and look at things as they mingle in
each other,
And do not wrong thy secret self by severing them!
The perfect union of love is rare, oh! very rare!
Look at us now and fill thy soul,
O fellow-man!

Differences and distances abound,
Cracks and fissures show where shattered love has
been,
The fallen bough is single in itself,
But the twain, love-united into one, how rare,
O fellow-man!

The blessed ones have conquered time and change.
They have become as one.
Good it is to look at them, they are happy.
Break not the garland of arms round the neck of the
beloved,
O fellow-man!

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THE FLOWERS OF THE GARLAND

LOOSEN not our fragile arms from thy neck, pray!
Quench not our flaming hearts with thine hand!
Turn us not away from the door of thy heart!
Cast us not from thee!
We have no one else but thee, O beloved!

We have left them behind who gave us birth,
We have torn ourselves away from those who were
ours,
We have given up our home and our land of birth,
To have but a moment with thee.

We have broken into two the frail reed of life;
We have faced death, or be what it may, for love;
Stepping with joy on the *sooli*.†
We have now stepped within thy door,
To have but a moment's glimpse of thee!
A glimpse and all is over!
A let us be with thee.

---

†*Scoli* is a sharp-edged steel rod by which mystics like Mansur of Persia were killed. It is said poetically that someone asked Mansur, "Which is the way to the Beloved?" and the *sooli*, piercing Mansur through his heart replied, "This way." Reference is also made to the needle that pierced the hearts of flowers and threaded them into a garland for the saint.

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We must go away from one another, and at that
moment cast us not from thy soul.
A moment, and we shall be no more!

We lack the sense of men,
Their motion and their life;
We are low in the scale;
We cannot love as they, we cannot worship thee
Like the crowds of beauty and joy and song that
gather to pay thee homage with their perfume.

A million bees hover in thy musk-scented black
tresses, maddened by thy love,
And each swarm is more glorious than the other.
Glory in glory, and glory on glory, circles round thee.

But all these things are blossoms hanging still on the
boughs of the trees that gave them birth,
And all are in underlying union with the life that
feeds them with blood,

And all are so tight bound still to their past,
For they are moving thing things.
All are astir with thy life whose current breaketh
not;
They turn again and again, and look at thee:
But who will shelter us, flowers torn from the bough,
If thou wilt not shelter us!
Thou art the friend of pain; shelter us, flowers
plucked from the stem.
All broken, torn and shattered is our past,
The delicate thread of life is gone!

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O friend of ruin and wreck! Our future will never
come.
Worn away are all the projections of past and future,
Here are we thine for a brief moment!
The world has ceased for us, and we have ceased for
the world.
Let us remain with thee a moment; throw us not off,
be but ours for a moment!

For the sake of thy God of Love!
In His Great Name,
Let us still keep touching thy limbs with our frail
hands!
Let us still keep garlanding thy neck with our tiny
arms–swooning from thy perfume!
For thy love, O friend of nothing!
We have thrown ourselves away for a riotous ravage
of joy!
What are we but what we lose in thy love!
Pray let us still keep touching thy limbs with our
frail little hands!
Pray let us still keep garlanding thy neck with our
tiny arms so helpless from thy perfume!

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THE KIKAR TREE*

I GROW upward, my march is heavenward,
My face is turned to the God of the skies!
Nor village, nor city, nor palace, nor hut I need in this world of thine;
I am he who can pass his days without a roof over his head, in rain, sunshine, hail and storm.
I love to lock at the God of the skies.
I need but a small piece of ground for my roots to stand in, to blossom, bear fruit snd die!
I need neither raiment nor food from thee, O world!
The rain-water is enough for me; I drink and I grow!
I live on air, I desire naught,
I am all alone In myself; the ascetic of centuries passed, and the ascetic of the centuries yet to come!
And yet for me, O world, thou hast but an axe!

---

*Acacia Arabica, a tree which is common through the Punjab, and generally cut for fuel.

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UNDER A LIME-TREE AT AMRITSAR

(1)

UNDER a lime-tree white and pink with the flower-
flower-clouds of *Karnaf*
I heard two different voices;
They came from the closed chambers of the heart
of an unopened bud:
I stood motionless, listening.
The heart of the flower was inspired with love,
And a vision-like figure grew from the fragrance
born of the flower-limbs.
What I saw was her life, her form of youth, her
beauty, her *Nirvan*.
I thought I heard the daughter speak to the mother
behind the veils
As I stood motionless below a blossoming lime-tree
at Amritsar—
Stood listening.

(2)

The daughter :—Unite the knot of thine arms, my
mother!
Unroll the thread of love thou hast spun around me!
I have grown, mother: I am growing;

† The flowers of the citrus species.

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Thy arms can no more contain me,
My youth is about to burst into a shower of
blossoms.
Too narrow the circle of thine arms.
I can no more be what I have been with thee, my
mother!
Thou hast given me birth,
Thu hast given me my limbs and my growth,
But the chamber of thy arms can no more hold my
youth and beauty mother!
Thou hast named me mother!
But a sweet scent steals into my soul from some far-
off place,
I know not whence! And a new, new fire has
wakened in my soul.
What omen is it I know not! But I am restless,
And nothing will let me be what I have been with
with thee, my mother!
I dream of the infinite regions outside,
And a finite man therein,
Who loves me, though I know not who he is.

(3)

The Mother :—O young, impatient, my largelimbed
girl!
Bide with thy mother,
And know the peace of the mother's lap,
And know thy youth is sweet slumber.
Thou art safe in the small circle of my poor arms;
Stay here still here, my daughter!

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Know thy mother's lap is enough for thee.
Once thou steppest over my door-sill thou wilt be
lost;
Like wisps of mist thou wilt be shatterd to nothing-
ness in the infinite void about which thou
so sweetly dreamest.
Thy dreams of infinite will make but a fragile dream
of thee,
Play not so with thy youth and thy life, my
daughter!

(4)

The Daughter :—Forbid me no more,
Advise me no more, mother!
Let go my garment, pray!
And no more pull me back;
Let me go,
I dream a dream within a dream,
I dream of the finit within the infinite,
I dream of the infiinite, infinite regions outside,
And a finite man therein.
My mother! he is my man; I am his, though I
know him not!
I shall not be lost in air, nor in space, nor in the
infinite void.
I will go and be lost in him as a drop loses itself in
the sea,
Such death in him, my mother is life, I love!
They call him the free mind of man and nature,
They call him God.

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will drink from his looks in those fairy-free realms
of his,
Mother! Be no more anxious for me,
I know nothing clearly; but I feel he is standing just
outside our door waiting for me,
I must away soon.
Now let go the hem of my garment.

(5)

As I stood under the lime-tree white and pink with
the flower-clouds of *Karna*
I saw her wrench her wrist from the hold of her
mother's hand,
And I saw her flee, without a word more, from her
mother.

(6)

The flower-born now is seen flying free in the
regions of her dreams!
Seems to float over both the garden and the desert
air,
And to inquire from every leaf and blade, from every
wind, as a stranger in a strange land,
"Pray tell me where? where is that man?"
Someone told her at last of his abode,
And she found him the man of her dreams!
She flung herself into his arms, and melted away in
him as a snowflake melts into the sea;
I saw her go, but no one ever saw her return;
Daughter of the flower, and of the *Nirvana!*

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THE PUNJAB AUTUMN; THE SEASON OF THE COOLING DEW

(Composed on the birthday of SriGuru Nanak Dev Ji, 1916)

I

The piping of the rain-birds has ceased,
Dadar and peepiya are silent now,
The dance of the peacock is over,
It is the season of the cooling dew!
The dew is falling everywhere,
And wet is every rose.
The gentle breath of heaven blows.

II

The clouds have stopped their thunder,
The lightning has hidden her spark,
The floods of the Punjab rivers have rolled away,
The rivers have shrunk low;
The storm is over, and the winds blow soft and slow.
It is the season of the cooling dew!
The dew is falling everywhere,
And wet is every rose,
The gentle breath of heaven blows.

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III

The sweet, sweet dew wets all with joy.
Wet with joy are the night and the moon.
And dewdrops quiver over the stars on high.
And joy-wet blows the wind on my face.
It is the season of cooling dew!
The dew is falling everywhere,
And wet is every rose,
The gentle breath of heaven blows.

IV

The cool, soft touches of the falling dew calm my soul;
And my mind, blessed with the dew-joys calm and cool, is at rest!
My beloved! come to me as the dew of my eyes!
Come to-day as the dew cometh!
And cool my soul parched by the pain of long, long seperation!
My beloved! it is the season of the cooling dew!
The dew is falling everywhere,
And wet is every rose.
The gentle breath of heaven blows.

V

O master of the order of the *Seli*! §
O dweller of heaven!
O great river!
My Guru Nank! come to me to-day!

§ Seli, or the small round string made of black wool that Guru Nanak used to wear at times.

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O light of lights !
Thy seats are the sun and the moon !
My beloved ! return to me to me to-day !
It is the season of the cooling dew !
The dew is falling everywhere,
And wet is every rose.
The gentle breath of heaven blows.

VI

It is the season of slumber and dew.
Cruel is all seperation !
Pray remove the distances that divide me from thee.
My beloved ! it is the season of the cooling dew !
The dew is falling everywhere,
And wet is every rose.
The gentle breath of heaven blows.

VII

My love ! stay no more in distant lands away from me !
Come into the vacant courtyard of my heart !
Dye my soul with the joys of thy presence,
And make it now thy home.
Stay at home ! Go no more out of me !
Dwell in my soul, before my eyes !
And for ever be there the perennial draught of my eyes.
My love ! it is the season of the cooling dew !
The dew is falling everywhere,
And wet is every rose.
The gentle breath of heaven blows.

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VIII

Fill my tearful gaze for ever with thy celestial face;
And let my eyes be for ever wet with the joy of
seeing thee!
My love! dwell for ever in my eyes!
It is the season of the cooling dew!
The dew is falling everywhere,
And wet is every rose,
The gentle breath of heaven blows.

IIX

It is now the dewy season,
The season of the happy meetings of love,
The season of the quenching of all fires of pain.
To me everything seems to be dew-wet;
From the blue of heaven the dew is falling soft;
It is the dew of deep unions;
And wonder and worship is in the eyes.
The seperated ones shall meet!
It is the season of the cooling dew!
The dew is falling everywhere,
And wet is every rose.
The gentle breath of heaven blows

X

Now is the time of everlasting embraces!
My beloved! come, meet me to-day!
Take me to thy bossom!
The dew is flooding things with joy.

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And wet is every rose.
The gentle breath of heaven blows.

XI

The dew cometh from heaven down!
It bringeth heavenly peace for all.
It wetteth all with sweetness.
Invisible, it raineth peep into souls.
It raineth love and peace and joy.
It raineth sweetness.
Dew! dew! my comrades!
It is the season of the cooling dew
The dew is falling everywhere,
And wet is every rose.
The gentle breath of heaven blows.

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ON SEPARATION FROM THE STARS AND THE SKY

(These thoughts were strung together by the poet on the first winter night when, for his night's rest, he had to descend from the roof to the rooms below.)

I

GOOD news, my soul! Good news for thee
The supreme hush of the night,
The sweet loneliness that love needs,
For thee, my soul! at last!
The din and clatter of the day has died,
Nothing stirs now, not a leaf-drop is heard.
Make no sound now, awake no one!
The city sleeps, a hundred feuds are buried in sleep.
In death-silence sleeps at night the restless mind
of man.
At last the dust has settled, my soul!
And all is tranquil calm.

II

The night-air, free of the day's fever and passion,
Blows over the sleeping foes,
That are almost friends in sleep.
The lips that moved to hurt are motionless,
The teeth that clenched in anger are sealed with sleep.

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The tongue, the sword-like thing that cut so sharp,
such unhealing wounds, is sheathed.

III

The day was filled with a thousand passions,
The air was thick with thoughts.
The restless eyes of passion led, the blind leading
the blind:
The eyes that laughed without the lips,
The eyes that spoke without a tongue,
The eyes that shot invisible arrows without a bow,
The eyes that cast nets of chain-armour,
And held many a mighty man prisoner,—
They smote well and hard without a weapon.
The martyrs fell and cried for life,
The eyes that had no lighting torch yet lit fires as
they glanced,
The eyes that rained down a shower when there
was no speck of cloud in the sky,—
They led the world, the world laughed as they laugh-
ed, and wept as they shed tears.
The eyes that made both a glancing and a starting, a
beckoning and a gazing, a laughing and a
loving, that had in them both the nectar and
the poison, held the worlds in sway,
These almighty eyes are now closed, the lids have
dropped on them.
Thank God! The magic of eyes has ended;
The tired world sleeps at last.
This is the time, my soul, for thy lovemaking with
the stars.

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IV

I am glad, the prison-walls of my house have dropped
away from me,
And I am on the top of my roof.
I feel as a victor feels when he enters a conquered
city.
The cruel roof was between me and heaven;
I conquer the roof by being on the roof.
My soul breathes freedom at last,
I am nearer heaven, and heaven is nearer me.
I see the clouds, I see the stars.

V

A million eyes twinkle, high in heaven;
They pour down a soft sweet rain of nectar.
What a solace in life at last I obtain,
As my eyes look into the million eyes of heaven.
No smouldering fire burns in the sky,
No cheek is pale with passion;
No trembling with fear, no restlessness, no dual
spirit divides!
No sense of keeping things for oneself!
No faithlessness resides in the sky.
No changing whims cause pain.
It is all God's face;
The night is wet with His love,
His grace fills all space,
The divine substance pours down in these wondrous
showers of starry light.

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One great illumination, one great beauteous twinkling of a million eyes!
One supreme repose! I see God.

VI

Infinite the azure of heaven;
The azure has the omnipresent sense of His presence,
He touches me with this infinite scene of wonder.
His touch! it makes me calm;
The eyes of the stars pour bliss into mine.
Ah! how strange when on the day that I stood in my full stature, erect and high my eyes fell on the meanness of the common life of the city!
And now on my roof, as I lie in my lowly starlit bed giving myself up to the beauty of the infinit, on my eyes bursts the subimest vision of the Most High.
The stars tell me—*He is.*
Wave on wave of wonder breaks;
Silence still more silent grows.
Light and ambrosia patter on my roof,
I feel some one unseen gathering me in His arms.

VII

Are the stars the eyes of God,
Whom Guru Nanak sings as One that hath a million eyes and yet no eyes,

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The eyes whose glances make all things continue,
Of Him who knoweth the love even of a small heart
on earth,
And keepeth Himself so bare that He may be visible
to the heart that beats in love?

VIII

Or is it that the bygone saints shine as stars?
Is it their souls that glow, as a beacon-lights on the
path to heaven to guide their fellow-men?

IX

Or is this azure a huge curtain that hangs over the
sacred secret?
The divine rays are stealing down to us from higher
worlds of light through some little chance
aperture in the curtain-cloth;
And these are not the stars, but the flashing glimpses
of the world of souls beyond.

X

Or are they strange worlds, where men of light are
concealed in light?
Where they in loving play throw round our hearts
the threads of light,
And pull the threads, with our souls enmeshed by
the ends they hold in their hands?

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Or else why do our souls feel such an invisible gentle
attraction for the stars?
We think we love the light of the stars?
After all, it may be the love of God throwing these
sacred threads for thought to climb.

XI

The stars, we know not what they are,
But from the stars we drink immortal light of
heaven.
The stars, we know not what they are,
But we gaze at God as we gaze at stars.

XII

My friendship with stars is old;
At midnight down they come to me, sliding down the
strings of rays,
And they enter into my soul with all the wealth of
heaven;
Every night they fill my life with God.

XIII

On other nights, when the milk-white showers of
moonlight fall,
It is like a sea of molten silver,
On the bosom of which glides my little boat;

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And in the boat I lie as it glides,
Cutting the billows of the surging sea of the blue!

XIV

My bosom-friends are the moon and the stars,
I exchange the secrets of my heart with vast azure.
My mistress is the silent night,
The tranquil, still soul, of vastness.
With their aid I live a divine forest life on my very roof,
And I feel as if I were in heaven while I am still on earth.

XV

With these divine friends I passed a full seven months of the year,
And for full seven months I was an idle explorer of the glorious night-scenes of the sublime.
I walked hand in hand with stars,
An inspiration of life to me was my voyage on the moonlit azure in my little boat,
But now I must descend from the roof,
And stay below for the five winter months;
And to-night is the separation night;
The cruel roof divides me again from my love-making with the stars.

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XVI

To-night the stars have disappeared from me,
To-night the vast azure has vanished from me.
O brother-moon! why hast thou left me,
And why does a little thin thatch hold us fast and
spoil our promises?
Is this what they call destiny?
My freedeedom-loving soul is to be shut up again
within four walls, with a stifling roof above
them to weigh me down!

XVII

My eyes! close down now; shut your doors and drop
your shades!
The scene is over;
Those that you loved to see are gone!
Better by far not to be than to without those whom
we love.

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WE ARE THE EVER-GREEN BRANCHES OF THE ORANGE-TREE

IN an orange orchard at Amritsar,
The tree just shorn of its branches sighed thus:
" I am the orange–tree of the city of the immortals,
I came and stood here to confer with men,
I posed in a hundred delightful ways for them, to the incarnate beauty of the blossom and the fruit.
I spread my hundred leafy arms to welcome them to the feast of my flesh and blood,
To the feast of the flowers,
To the feast of the fruits,
To the feast of fragrance,
To the feast of the life-sap,
But they have understood me not.
Now in my old age their axe has run amuck, and I am shorn of my leafy wings."

"Farewell! O parent root!" said the tornoff branches of the orange-tree; "thou immortal root of life!
We fall, it is an accident of birth.
But knowledge cometh in the majestic flow of light beyond this moment's darkness.

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Losing thy blossom from within is real death.
We ourselves die, no one can kill,
No axe can cut a flowered twig.
We fall, but we will rise again;
We are the ever-green branches of the orange–tree.

THE END

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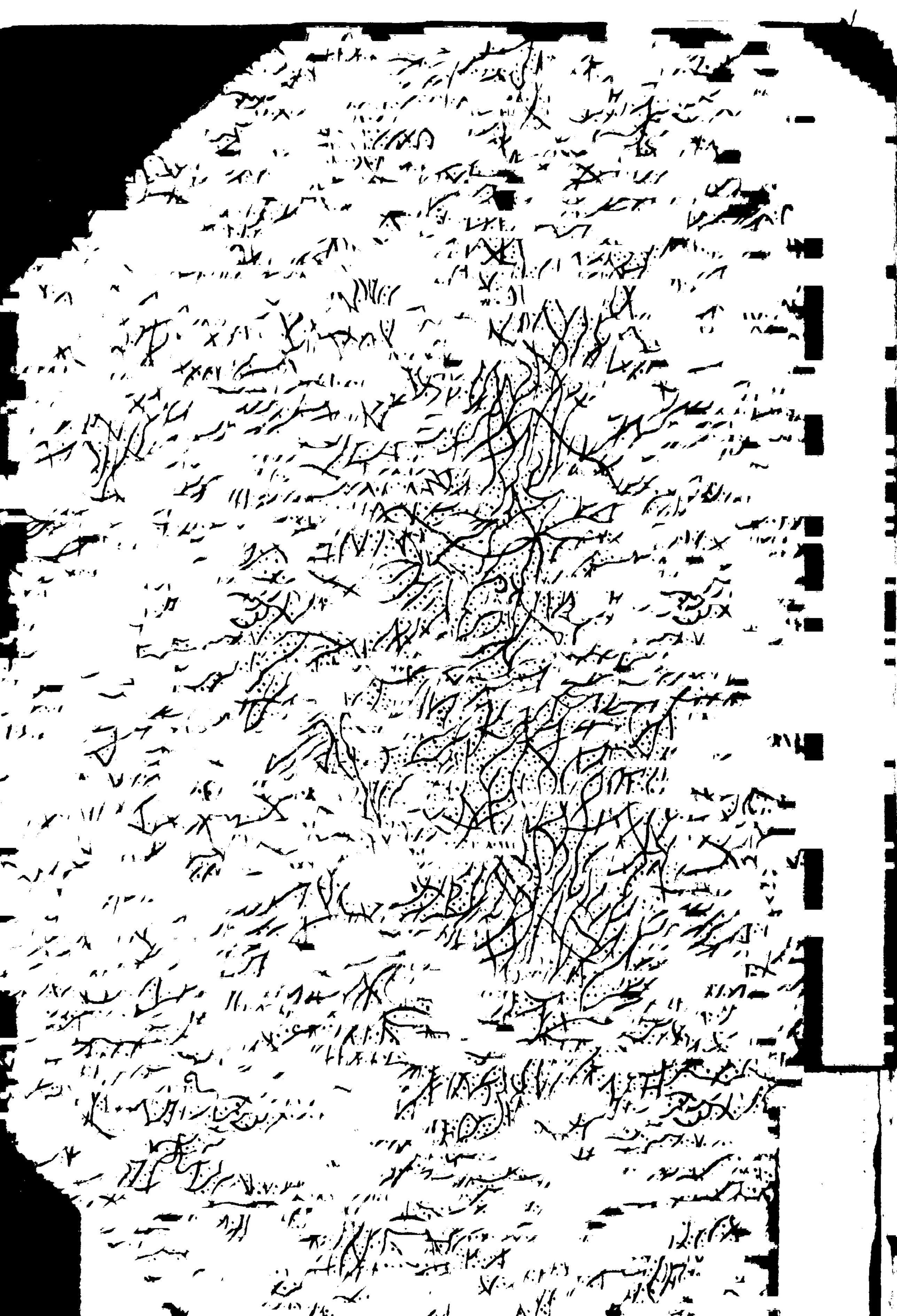

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